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POETRY: *A Magazine of Verse*

Watching the meteors whizz,
Warm, with the sun always by.

God, if You had but the moon
Stuck in Your Cap for a lamp,
Even You'd tire of it soon,
Down in the dark and the damp.

Nothing but blackness above,
And nothing that moves but the cars—
God, if You wish for our love,
Fling us a handful of stars!

Clement Wood.

NOTE. The reviewer of *Challenge* did not fail to read *Caliban in the Coal Mines*, that "cumulative answer to all objections."

FROM LONDON: DEATH OF A FRENCH POET

I have just seen in today's *Chronicle* that Charles Péguy, poet, socialist, editor of *Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine, est mort pour la patrie* at the battle of the Marne. I have been glancing at one or two of his essays in *Les Cahiers* and in his *Oeuvres Choisies*. He wasn't a personality which appealed to me, though I knew him perfectly well by repute. His work always seemed to be more political and socialist than literary. But here is a piece of rather good emotional writing which I struck by accident. It is called, *O flags of the past, so fair in histories*, and runs thus:

We are a sacrificed generation. We are not only conquered—that would be nothing. There are glorious defeats, sounding disasters, more fixed, better preservers of glory, finer, more accepted, more commemorated than any triumph. But our defeat is the worst of all, an obscure defeat; we shall not even be de-

From London: Death of a French Poet

spised, we shall be ignored, perhaps we shall be grotesque. There are defeats—Waterloo was one—which more than victories are fixed in the memories of man, in the common memory of humanity. We shall be niggards, we shall be little, we shall be ordinary, we shall be mediocre; or rather we shall not be at all. Nobody will notice us. We shall pass unperceived. . . . We shall never be great; we shall never be known; we shall never be written of.

The date of that is 1909, but there is still much of the bitterness of 1870 in it.

Péguy was a poet as well as an eloquent prose-writer. I have before me three books of his poetry published in *Les Cahiers de la Quinzaine: La Tapisserie de Sainte Gèneviève et de Jeanne d'Arc, La Tapisserie de Notre Dame, and Ève*. The last is a huge long poem of four hundred pages written entirely in quatrains. In this admittedly hasty, absurdly superficial, note I can't attempt to criticise it. It gives a rather peculiar and epic effect by repeating one line at the beginning of about four to ten stanzas in sequence. Thus:—

Et ce grand général qui prit tout un royaume
(Et ce n'était pas rien le royaume de France).
Dans le dernier climat et sous le dernier dome
N'aura pas plus vieilli que la jeune espérance.

Et ce grand général qui saisit un royaume
(Et quel saisissement, le royaume de France),
Dans le dernier climat et sous le dernier dome
Sera du meme jeu que la jeune espérance.

It is a poem which quickly bores; nevertheless it has its points. Note the martial subject in these verses taken quite at hazard.

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I gather from another book, *Le Mystère des Saints Innocents*, that M. Péguy was a Roman Catholic as well as a militarist. Indeed he belonged to the group of reactionaries satirized by France in *La Révolte des Anges*. At the battle of the Marne Péguy probably fought somewhere near Guy Charles Cros, one of the most satirical and delightful of the new poets of France. Thus every shade of intellectual opinion as well as of political and religious difference is actually represented in the French army. One of Péguy's essays seeks to prove that "there was heroism (in the large sense) in a republic." He had it proved to him before he died.

Richard Aldington.

Note. Another French poet now fighting with the Allies is Nicholas Beauduin, leader of the *Paroxysmistes*, and editor of that interesting quarterly, *La Vie des Lettres*.

NOTES

Mr. D. H. Lawrence, author of *Love Poems and Others*, and *Sons and Lovers* (Kennerley), is one of the most prominent of the younger English poets. POETRY introduced him to its readers last January.

Mr. John Rodker is a young American who lives in England, and whose first book of poems will soon be published there.

Mr. Francis Howard Williams, of Philadelphia, is the author of a number of plays in verse, and of *The Flute-*